

The Albany HERALD

By Danny Carter
Sunday, January 9, 2011

Georgia Trend selects Phoebe Putney CEO Joel Wernick as one of the most influential people in Georgia.

Looking over my *Georgia Trend* magazine this week, it was no surprise to see Joel Wernick, president and CEO of Phoebe Putney Memorial Hospital, on the magazine's list of 100 most influential people.

If you are talking health care in Southwest Georgia, the conversation starts with Wernick.

He's a polarizing guy. You're either with him or against him, it seems.

As the man at the top at Phoebe, and the one with the biggest salary, he's the one to blame when anything goes wrong at the area's biggest hospital.

Conversely, I'm not sure he gets much credit when things go right. And Phoebe is doing a lot of things right. People would rather talk about the Cayman Island accounts and the bullying ways.

I can imagine he'd be a tough foe if you get in his way of doing what he deems best for Phoebe and the medical community.

But I have my way of assessing Wernick. Let's say I owned a large business and needed an executive who could make life-altering decisions and form a team of leaders who would follow him into battle.

If so, Wernick's my man.

TOP 100: Outside of Wernick, the list of Top 100 from Southwest Georgia is short.

U.S. Rep. Sanford Bishop is on the [*Georgia Trend* 100 Most Influential Georgian's List].

Georgia Trend cited Bishop for his role in getting \$350 million to build a new medical facility at Fort Benning to replace the outdated Martin Army Hospital.

Also on the list is State Sen. John Bullock, a Thomas County farmer. Bulloch is chair of the Senate Agriculture and Consumer Affairs Committee and is an influential voice in the debate over water wars between Georgia, Florida and Alabama.

U.S. Sen. Saxby Chambliss, a Republican from Moultrie, is on the list, mainly for his advocacy for agriculture and the military.

George E. Deese, chairman and CEO of Flowers Foods in Thomasville, made the Top 100 list. Deese directs about 8,800 people in 40 bakeries across the country.